Marjorie M. Halpin

Investigating the Goblin Universe

Are manlike monsters figments of human nature or creatures of external nature? This article considers the problems we face in interpreting the world around us. In particular, the author discusses the strong influence of social consensus and established science in determining what is "believable" and comments upon the consequent sanctions against reporting phenomena which fall outside accepted limits. She further explores how the concept of manlike monsters affects our definition of what is human.

Each year in North America an unknown number of otherwise apparently unremarkable and ordinary people encounter Sasquatch (usually known in the United States as Bigfoot)—a large, hairy, upright-walking, primate-like creature. Usually, these encounters occur in isolated places, commonly when the person is alone. Some of these people report their experience to local authorities or to the media. The reports are routinely ignored or denied by the scientific and academic establishments. There is a strong consensus among both academics and non-academics that the creature described by these people does not, and cannot, exist.

Science, especially natural science, has the task of describing the natural world, of identifying and naming its parts and their relationships. There is no room in the scheme of things as known by natural science for the Sasquatch to exist: it is a classificatory anomaly which is essentially "unthinkable" in scientific terms. "The fascination of the subject, for me," writes John Green, the journalist who has written more about the Sasquatch than anyone else, "involves the very thing that I am most inclined to complain about—that the scientific world ignores it."[1] Considering that scientists, with few exceptions, are convinced that the Sasquatch does not exist, it is hardly surprising that they do not actively investigate it. Such a pursuit would be looking for something that cannot exist, and hence it would be defined in advance as a supreme waste of time.

Yet it is difficult to ignore the continued reports that the Sasquatch is manifesting out there in the wilderness. John Napier, one of the few scientists who has carefully examined the Sasquatch reports, calls his colleagues to

task on their refusal to examine the situation. Consider Sir Peter Medawar's definition of science as the "art of the soluble. . . . Good scientists study the most important problems they think they can solve. It is, after all, their professional business to solve problems, not merely to grapple with them."[2] Napier asserts that such a "stultifying directive" is "dismally flat" as a "clarion call for the venturesome. . . . Solubility is surely not the principle by which great discoveries have been made."[3]

Ron Westrum in Part I of this book chronicles a startling episode in the history of science in which conformity to accepted scientific principles prevented scientists from investigating reports by ordinary people about stones that fell from the sky. It was only after they had a theory which could explain the origin of meteorites that scientists took such reports seriously. This conservatism results from what is now called "prematurity." A discovery is defined as premature "if its implications cannot be connected by a series of simple logical steps to canonical, or generally accepted, knowledge."[4] It is possible that Sasquatch is one of those things whose time for acknowledgement has not yet come. Equally importantly, the concept of prematurity reminds us that scientific description of the world must remain open or unfinished and that a world which has been totally described, or completely known, is one in which all potential has disappeared.

Part III of this book presents a short history, in the articles by Green and Suttles, of how the Sasquatch became perceived as problematic, as well as the tentative results, all inconclusive, of the application of modern techniques of scientific investigation to evidence purported by its collectors to be from the Sasquatch, in the articles by Gill, Kirlin and Hertel, and Bryant and Trevor-Deutsch. These are the articles that give this book its peculiar flavour, for they contain the assumption that the Sasquatch *might be real* and thereby constitute a serious challenge to scientific control over knowledge of the natural world. This is what keeps the issue alive and makes Sasquatch a genuine mystery. Mystery is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a hidden or secret thing; a matter unexplained or inexplicable; something beyond human knowledge or comprehension." Whereas science itself is replete with mystery, most of us live in an essentially humdrum or uninteresting world in which things are as they are. Sasquatch presents us with the tantalizing possibility that things are as they are not. Uncaptured and unknown, but possibly real, Sasquatch is pure potentiality, pure possibility.

As our scientific knowledge of it increases, Sasquatch will lose the potentiality, the mystery, that it now has. We can already see this happening. In order for the creature to be real for John Green, its potentiality to be human-like must be destroyed: "They are all animal. Magnificent animals, completely self-sufficient on their physical endowments alone, but no more than animals."[5] Grover Krantz, a scientist, also reduces it to an animal, one that

supposedly became extinct millenia ago: "the Sasquatch is not human, it is probably *Gigantopithecus*, and its reality can be established only with an actual specimen."[6] As a relict primate, Sasquatch retains a certain evolutionary potentiality (it did not become extinct when it was *supposed* to), but its assignment to a known category, however improbable, reduces its mystery to a more comfortable level. At least it has a place, a category or location, in which to manifest; it has been included in the evolutionary scheme of things.

Normally, however, Sasquatch is consigned to what John Napier calls the "Goblin Universe." Let us explore this category and assume for the purposes of argument that the inhabitants of the Goblin Universe include all beings or creatures which human beings have reported from their experience but which have not been catalogued as real by natural science. Section II of this book describes a number of these, which are but a small fraction of the total number which could be found. The realms of history, art, literature, and anthropology include an incredibly rich and varied pageant of unreal beings, uncountable numbers of which have streamed out of the human mind as far back as records and images go.

Sasquatch, the Loch Ness monster, U.F.O. beings, God, and the Devil are distinguished in this category insofar as they are those of its inhabitants which are regularly reported by members of modern, Western, post-industrial society; the rest of the inhabitants of the Goblin Universe are usually encountered by members of exotic societies, and they were familiar to members of our own society prior to the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Most of us, however, have not personally experienced Sasquatch, the Loch Ness monster, U.F.O. beings, God, or the Devil, and we accept the reigning social consensus that they do not exist, although there is some confusion in our minds about God. For us, then, the Goblin Universe does not exist. How different are we, we wonder, from most of the other human beings on the planet, whom we have reason to believe still accept the Goblin Universe as real? This book can be read as an examination of the process whereby we destroyed our Goblin Universe and whereby we are now quite ruthlessly destroying those of other cultures through the imposition of our rationality and reality upon them.

In his essay for this book Robin Ridington describes giant animals that he was told about by the Dunne-za Indians of northeastern British Columbia:

> Monsters of mythic time are real to the Dunne-za because they are an inherent property of culturally instructed experience. They cannot be real in the same way within the experience of an anthropologist or any other member of modern historical society.

How does this work? Ridington explains it in different ways. "The giant animals," he says, "are encountered directly by every normal person at the time of the childhood vision quest experience and they remain a constant presence behind the appearance of everyday reality." He also says that "the mythic giant animals are metaphoric transformations of everyday events, not a separate occult reality." Nelson Graburn, who describes part of the Goblin Universe of the Inuit, refuses to even discuss the question of its reality. It "is a question which is best answered," he writes, "from an existential or inter-subjective point of view." Thomas Buckley approaches the reality of monsters to the Yurok Indians another way: "monsters may be 'explained' as infantile oral-aggressive fears projected outwards . . . yet such explanations must not be mistaken for real comprehension." Richard Preston, who discusses the giant cannibal Witiko of the Algonkian Indians of eastern Canada, agrees:

> The problem of translating the Algonkian idiom of experience into terms that are understandable and worthwhile within our own tradition of urbane intellectual inquiry is poorly served by psychodynamic and structuralist theories, unless the effort includes the judicious use of Algonkian phenomena.

These scholars are not dodging the question. As anthropologists, they have learned that reality as it is experienced by members of other cultures is not the same reality as experienced by ourselves. This is formulated in anthropology as a principle of cultural relativity—reality as experienced by human beings is a function of the culture within which their knowledge is acquired. Sociologists term it the "social contruction of reality."[7] Graburn expresses this principle in his article when he states that "the realities and knowledge of any culture stem from the nature of that culture and its modes of communication, most specifically from the modes and media of communication." Ridington writes that "implicit in the anthropological understanding is a sense of the relativity of the information that constitutes a culture's reality."

Thus, in order to investigate the status of the reality of the Sasquatch and other inhabitants of the Goblin Universe for ourselves, it is necessary to look at how our culture defines reality and how that definition is communicated to us. Insofar as Sasquatch investigators continually call for the study of Sasquatch phenomena by scientists, there is an implicit recognition that the reality in terms of which we deny the Goblin Universe is essentially a scientifically constructed or defined one.

"We lack one thing, gentlemen—a motive."

Drawing by Geo. Price; © 1937, 1965 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

Drawing by Alan Dunn; © 1960 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

One of the most significant things that a non-scientist can know about science is that it frequently contradicts the knowledge of common sense and direct experience. This is as true of social and behavioural science as it is of physics. From our experience of the world, for example, we cannot verify the following statement by Sir Karl Popper about the reality of matter based upon the knowledge of physicists:

> matter [is] highly packed energy, transformable into other forms of energy; and therefore something of the nature of a *process*, since it can be converted into other processes such as light and . . . motion and heat. . . . [Thus] one may say that the results of modern physics suggest that we should give up the idea of a substance or essence. . . . The universe now appears to be not a collection of things, but an interacting set of events or processes.[8]

Whereas we *experience* the world as "a collection of things," as matter having qualities of hardness, endurance, or colour, science creates a way of penetrating matter, a way of knowing it, in which matter itself disappears, is transformed into energy. The larger implication of this is that anything which is known scientifically, which is penetrated in a scientific way, changes from the form in which it was known in the world of common sense. Another way to say this is that the things known to common sense "disappear" once they are known scientifically. This includes human beings themselves. In order to describe society, science analyzes human action in terms of its patterns or regularities. Once the social dimension of human action is recognized, the self-determining individual whom we believe ourselves to be disappears—we discover that we are socially programmed. This has profound implications—it means that scientific knowledge creates a definition of reality that is unavailable to common sense and ordinary experience.

We experience the world through our perception of it, by means of data about the world being delivered to our brain through our senses. Perception can be defined as "the process by which an individual maintains contact with his environment."[9] Let us restrict this to visual perception for a moment. From somewhere inside our heads, which we locate just behind our eyes, we see things in the world outside ourselves. Until we learn otherwise, we are persuaded by common sense that we see things as they really are. Scientifically, however, this is known as naive realism, for scientists who study perception have repeatedly demonstrated that what we see out there is not the same thing as what is really out there.[10] We do not hold the thing itself in our minds but only an image of it, and the image is always different from the

thing. All that we can perceive of what is out there is what our sensory organs are capable of delivering to us. The more we penetrate the capabilities of these organs scientifically, the more limitations we discover. Neurologist V.B. Mountcastle gives us an indication of how profound the implications of these limitations are:

> Each of us believes himself to live directly within the world that surrounds him, to sense its objects and events precisely, to live in real and current time. I assert that these are perceptual illusions, for each of us confronts the world from a brain linked to what is 'out there' by a few million fragile sensory nerve fibres. These are our only information channels, our lifelines to reality.[11]

The few million nerve fibres by means of which we can establish perceptual contact with the world are not capable of delivering information to our brain about everything that is out there.

Consider the visual perception of the frog. Scientists have discovered that a frog can only see an insect when the insect is in motion; the frog does not have the visual capacity to see insects at rest. "The frog's eye does not even signal to its brain a fly within reach if [the fly] does not move."[12] The frog is programmed to catch moving flies; its environment does not include motionless insects. The frog's eye mirrors a moving world.

Many experiments have been designed to measure the capacities of the human perceptual programme. A very simple one is the Mueller-Lyer illusion. When you look at this drawing, you will perceive that the two horizontal lines are different in length.

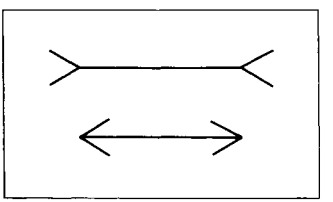

FIGURE 1. THE MUELLER-LYER ILLUSION[13]

Your perception is in error, as you can readily discover by measuring the two lines with any physical object. The act of measurement is an objective or independent correction of your false perception. You now know more than you see. Notice, however, that you cannot use what you know to change your perception: the two lines still appear to be of different lengths. This illusion is a vivid demonstration of a contradiction between objective knowledge and personal experience. The relationship between our brains and our eyes is so

constructed that the eyes cannot deliver a correct perception of this simple drawing. When we consider the multiplicity of lines and angles and other sensible qualities of the environment, we can begin to appreciate the opportunities the world offers for perceptual distortion.

Furthermore, any complex animal—whether frog or human—responds to its environment in a creative rather than a passive way. It does not just receive perceptual information; perception is not wide open to the world. "A hungry animal divides the environment into edible and inedible things. An animal in flight sees roads to escape and hiding places."[14] The animal's perception is affected by its internal state or disposition. Between the object and our perception of it, a critical act of attention intervenes. In a very profound way, we see what we are looking for. This can be demonstrated with another familiar illusion.

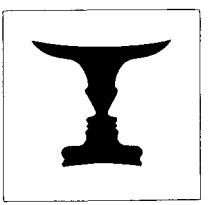

FIGURE 2. FIGURE AND GROUND ILLUSION[15]

You can interpret this figure either as a black vase on a white ground, or as two heads facing each other on a black ground. Notice that you can direct your attention from one image to the other and back again. Notice also that if you engage in more sustained contemplation of the drawing, it will change on you automatically. This is the brain working independently of active intention. Even more significantly, notice that when you focus on one aspect of the drawing, such as the faces, you are forced to make the other aspect, the vase, disappear. While you remember that it is there, you cannot see it until you refocus your attention, at which point the faces disappear.

Becoming critical of our own perception, as in the above exercises, allows us to become aware that we are superior in some fashion to the operations of our own brain, insofar as we can direct it and play with it. But it also shows us that the brain cannot be trusted. That part of us which is critical of the brain can be called the self. John Eccles states that "there is a special sense in which the self or the mind is superior to the brain, which we can *catch* in the operations of memory and visual perception."[16] We all experience the act of searching our memories looking for a word or a name. The thing we are searching with is the conscious self. Eccles further asserts that the self "is superior to the objects which are delivered, and it is superior in that it can accept or reject them and use or modify them and put them into the brain storage."[17]

The process by which the self scans the brain's memory is not yet scienti-

fically known, although neurologists are working on it intensively. We do not yet know how certain images become easily available to consciousness and others do not, nor how the images are found and retrieved.[18] One of the great discoveries of Freud was that we construct barriers to memory which prevent certain painful or inadmissible memories from surfacing. Freud also demonstrated that such memories influence behaviour even though they remain below conscious awareness. This has been verified by experiments in subliminal perception, which confirm the broader principle that we can be influenced by stimuli of which we have no conscious awareness at any time. Information which we receive below the level of conscious awareness has been reported to influence eight different categories of experience: dreams, memory, adaptation level, conscious perception, verbal behaviour, emotional responses, drive-related behaviour, and perceptual thresholds.[19]

What we also cannot know from the perspective of common sense is that "most of the acquired information received through our senses is also unconscious."[20] Here is how this has been summarized by Karl Popper:

> The self . . . has often been compared to an iceberg, with the unconscious self as the vast submerged part and the conscious self as the tip projecting from the water. Although there is little basis for estimating magnitude here, it nevertheless appears that at any given moment what is selected, filtered, and admitted to full consciousness, is only a small fraction of all that we act upon and which acts upon us. Most of what we 'learn', what we acquire and integrate into our personality, our self, what we make use of in action or in contemplation, remains unconscious or subconscious.[21]

It could not be otherwise, since our efficiency in behaviour depends upon automatic operation of our previous programming. This is how we survive in a complicated world. Consider learning to drive a car. At first we are hesitant and confused as we learn to make a new set of decisions with which to control our behaviour. As our mastery increases, these decisions are relegated to unconsciousness, and we perform automatically. We have all experienced the realization while driving that we have come from one place to another without conscious awareness of having done so, and with no memory of it. We have been attending to something else in our conscious awareness. The unconscious operation of our programme for driving frees conscious awareness for other tasks.

Anthropologists and sociologists examine human behaviour in order to detect patterns which reveal the operation of socially derived programmes.

Most of these are unavailable to us from the perspective of common sense and operate below the level of awareness. A famous example is Emile Durkheim's study of suicide.[22] Durkheim discovered that the suicide rate in any one society at any period of time is extremely stable, a given number of people destroying themselves year after year in a consistent pattern. He concluded that such a pattern can only be explained from the social, rather than the individual, perspective:

> the social suicide-rate can be explained only sociologically. At any given moment the moral constitution of society establishes the contingent of voluntary deaths. There is, therefore, for each people a collective force of a definite amount of energy, impelling men to self-destruction . . . . Each human society . . . has a greater or lesser aptitude for suicide.[23]

The startling regularity with which predicted numbers of people destroy themselves in automobile accidents at holiday periods is of the same order. The isolation of the regularity, the pattern, locates the source of the behaviour in a social context, rather than individual decision or even individual error.

To the extent that the social and behavioural sciences locate patterns in human behaviour, individual human control over behaviour seems to disappear. In extreme formulations, humans are reduced to socially programmed automatons, passively responding to environmental requirements by means of automatically triggered programming.

While the philosophical issues raised in the last paragraph cannot be addressed here, we can now restate the problem of the Sasquatch in more accurate terms. Are the reported experiences of Sasquatch witnesses the result of cultural programming or the result of an actual encounter with an animal corresponding to the one described? It is clear that Sasquatch reports over both time and space reveal the existence of a pattern: the creature is large, hairy, of a certain form, and announced by an offensive smell (see Green's article in Part III). But what is the source of the pattern? Is its source inside or outside the human brain? Each essay in this book examines this pattern, or what seems to be the same or a similar pattern, in terms of different manifestations of it. Yet each of them can be resolved in terms of either an inside or an outside source. Thus none of the authors can achieve a definite resolution to the problem posed by the Sasquatch—no one really knows how.

But there is another reformulation of the Sasquatch question which I believe makes a significant advance toward resolution of it. This involves

enlarging the context within which the Sasquatch phenomena are considered. Specifically, I believe we should examine the full context within which the creature is seen, rather than continue to dwell almost exclusively on *what* is seen, on the object as a thing in itself.

I believe that this places the investigation much more closely in tune with the scientific spirit of our time. The science of perception, for example, is currently being reformulated so that internal and external factors become interdependent aspects of the same event. The basic assumption of this reformulation has been stated by Shaw, McIntyre, and Mace as follows:

> Experiences are logically coextensive with events. The relation between the two is direct rather than mediated. An event is not the cause of an experience nor the experience a response to an event. Experiences and events accompany one another as different but equally important aspects of the same dynamic phenomenon in the ecosystem—that is, as the terms of the relationship between organism and environment. To paraphrase the distinction made by Bertrand Russell: An *event* is the experience described from the point of view of the environment, while an *experience* is the event described from the point of view of the organism.[24]

The importance of this reformulation cannot be overstressed. It means that scientific attention is now focussed on the terms of the relationship between inside and outside as different aspects of the same thing. Instead of focussing on the object of experience as reported, attention shifts to the larger context within which the object is experienced and examines the interdependent and necessary relationship between object and experience. Ultimately, the direction of this reformulation is toward a synthesis in which "the universe is a constructed interaction between the observer and the observed."[25]

This is subtle point which, I think, can enlarge our consideration of the Sasquatch problem and point us toward its possible resolution.

We have seen that when we focus on Sasquatch as the object of experience, without examining the context of that experience, we cannot resolve the question of its source. It is either out there or it is not. We are restricted to examining the reported qualities of the thing itself. If, however, we turn our attention to the context within which it is experienced, we can bring new information to bear upon it. This holds true for many of the inhabitants of the Goblin Universe. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that supernatural encounters have an experiential dimension the interpretation of which depends upon the context (including the consciousness of the observer)

within which the encounter occurs. Kenneth Pelletier has already requested that scientific observations

> be qualified by the observer's particular state of consciousness . . . that places him in a particular relationship to the events observed. If the observer were in a different state of consciousness, it is very likely that he would observe other variables, other interactions, and formulate different hypotheses about the events that have been observed.[26]

I have already quoted Robin Ridington as saying that the Dunne-za experience of giant animals normally occurs "at the time of the childhood vision quest." Is it possible that the vision quest creates a special context within which things that cannot normally be experienced *can* be experienced? To bring this question even closer to the Sasquatch, let us look at the context in which the Coast Salish Indians of British Columbia experienced the being which now we call Sasquatch (see Suttles's article in this book). This was one of a class of beings called *slalakums*, which have been described by Wilson Duff as follows:

> Supernatural creatures living in the natural world were generally called "slalakums," and the same word was used as an adjective to describe anything strange and unnatural. Some of the slalakums had quite definite forms and characteristics, as, for example, the cannibal woman *Θu'xia*, the powerful double-headed creature *si'xqi*, and the notorious hairy giants or *sE'sx̣ac*. Certain bodies of water were called slalakum places, being the homes of slalakums or having slalakum properties of their own. Illness was the usual result of seeing a slalakum.[27]

Wayne Suttles has previously examined whether the slalakums are real to the Coast Salish and concluded that they are.[28] While he notes that there does exist a dichotomy in Coast Salish thought between a vision experience and an ordinary experience, the fact that the beings encountered in both kinds of experience are real leads him to dismiss this distinction as not being "relevant to our enquiry."[29] Here I must take exception, since under the terms of the argument I am constructing, it is precisely the context of the experience that is most relevant.

In the reports of Coast Salish encounters with Sasquatch-like beings

published by Suttles we find the following information: "when you see them, it makes you crazy"; they "had some kind of poison which they could throw at a person and make him crazy"; "it put him to sleep right away"; "they make you sleep"; they could "make people crazy."[30] Such things did not happen when the Coast Salish encountered beavers or other animals in the course of normal experience. Indeed, the latter would have been absurd to a hunting and fishing people.

A sickness called "soul loss" was one of the results of having a slalakum experience. It was described by Duff as follows:

> A man's soul might leave his body when he was visiting some strange, unnatural place; it might be shocked out of him by an encounter with a supernatural creature (slalakum); or it might be stolen by a malignant shaman. In any case, unless it was returned to his body fairly soon, he would die.[31]

The soul that leaves the body was called *smisti'yux* by Duff's informants, and the belief was that "the only time the soul can leave the body without ill effects is during sleep, when it wanders around, seeing other places and meeting the souls and ghosts of other people, resulting in dreams."[32] It appears, then, that the part of the self which disappears in a slalakum Sasquatch encounter is also that part of the self which dreams. In an ethnography of the Katzie (a group of the Coast Salish people) written by Diamond Jenness, this same part of the self is glossed as "vitality" and "thought," while the term "soul" has a different connotation.[33] Assuming that both native terms are the same and that Jenness provided an accurate gloss, the following description of this aspect is relevant:

> Man's vitality or thought pervades his whole body so that if he loses an arm or a leg, he loses some of his vitality and his character may change. Unlike the soul or the shadow, whose departure brings instant death, it can leave his body for a short period and return, as when a person dreams or faints or goes into a trance. . . .
>
> The vitality or thought is responsible for memory. Thus Old Pierre announced one morning that his vitality or thought had visited a certain rock during the night, and that he was now able to tell me the legend about it which he had forgotten the day before. It is partly responsible, again, for another attribute. If a man keeps himself

> absolutely pure by continence, and frequent bathing, then at some time or other his thought may leave his body and, travelling to some holy place invisible to normal eyes, gain an excess of talent or power (swia'm') which it will impart to its owner when it returns; but if it fails to return, the man will become crazy and die.[34]

This vitality or thought is imagined as a miniature likeness of its owner, which enables it to be distinguished when it is wandering about. All animals and plants, wind and water, and the celestial bodies possess vitality and can add their own to that of a person's, as a gift.[35] There are other creatures or beings that do not manifest on earth at all which are able to confer superior vitality or power to shamans. These beings live in "mystic realms" and can be known to a man "through visions only, when his vitality leaves his body and travels to their homes."[36]

The dreams or visions in which supernatural encounters occur are called *sulia*. In some cases a sulia experience is described as a true dream (occurring in sleep), in other cases somewhat differently, as in the following example:

> They go away into the woods and fast as long as they can stand it, until they meet their power. It is a dream (sulia), and appears to them as a nice young man or girl who sings for them, dances for them. . . . Most of them wouldn't be sleeping when they see this thing.[37]

Duff was told by one informant that meeting a slalakum was "not a sulia experience." It seems that slalakum and sulia experiences are different in kind and certainly in their desirability to humans.

In order to have a sulia experience and receive additional vitality or power, the Coast Salish began active training as children, beginning in special cases as young as three years old. Duff's description of such training for a boy of about twelve years of age is as follows:

> He might go out on successive overnight vigils, returning home at dawn, or he might stay away from home several days at a time, going increasingly farther from home on each successive vigil. Coming to a lake, a stream, a waterfall, he would stay for several days, fasting the whole time. He would make himself thoroughly clean by chewing

> laxative bark and by tickling his throat with a stick to induce vomiting, by sweating in a sweat-house, by frequent bathing and swimming, and by rubbing his body with boughs. All night long he would sing and dance. He would sleep only when exhausted, and then try to dream of the power he wanted. When he did go home, he would observe strict continence, and would avoid everything that was impure.[38]

It was said that slalakum places were good places to go for the spirit vigil.

The reason for examining Coast Salish belief in such detail has been to demonstrate through example the importance of context to the interpretation of phenomena. While all the beings described were real to the Coast Salish people, the slalakums (including the sEsχa'c) were experienced in the natural world as unnatural and frightening beings, and the experience itself was believed to cause "craziness," unconsciousness, and soul loss. These experiences appear to have been spontaneous, not sought after, and occurred when persons were alone in isolated places reputed to be dangerous. In this they contrast sharply with the desirable and sought-after experience of spiritual beings in sulia or dream for which children were put through rigorous training designed to produce altered states of consciousness. Both kinds of experience affected that portion of the self identified as thought or vitality, the critical difference being that the encounter with a slalakum caused the conscious self to disappear, while the encounter in sulia bestowed upon it an increase in vitality or power. The image or being was beneficent when manifesting in sulia or mind and maleficent when manifesting in nature.

My point is this: although supernatural beings were experienced by the Coast Salish as real, such experiences occurred in non-ordinary or heightened contexts, apparently involving altered states of consciousness, including dreams. Sasquatch was no more a mundane or ordinary animal to the Coast Salish than it is to us.

It is instructive to compare the Coast Salish contexts for supernatural encounters with those reported for the people of Tahiti by Robert Levy.[39] This is not to assert anything so bold as a human universal, but only to show that encounters with the supernatural have similar experiential dimensions in two widely separated cultures.

Tahitians experience encounters with the supernatural in the natural world as well as in dreams, and they also explain dreaming as the wandering of the soul. When the supernatural is encountered in the natural world, the encounter is accompanied by a feeling state called *mehameha*, which may be glossed as "uncanny feelings."[40] People describe sensations of "a swollen, enlarged head, hair standing on end, and gooseflesh as the body reaction of mehameha." It is summarized as "a specific type of feeling in a specific con-

text, the context of the 'unknown'." This is made especially vivid in the following statement by one of Levy's informants: "If you don't know what is causing the noise, you are mehameha; but if you do know it, it disappears."[41] The feeling of mehameha occurs when one is alone, "because being with somebody else, no matter who, prevents the feeling of mehameha."[42] Levy concludes:

> The sense of mehameha is taken as immediate and strong evidence that one is in the presence of the supernatural. It is almost a *perception* of the supernatural as warmth is a perception of heat. One may be mistaken, have an illusion—'It was only a rat'—but usually it directly indicates the presence of a supernatural situation.[43]

After careful examination of the contexts of the uncanny, Levy decides that "the sense of mehameha does seem to arise in situations of possible contextual confusion," and he relates this to a difficulty in categorization. He uses a quotation from Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin which is significant to the argument being developed here:

> Categorizing is the means *by which the objects of the world about us are identified.* The act of identifying some thing or event is an act of "placing" it in a class. Identification implies that we are able to say either, "There is thingumbob again" or "There is another thingumbob." While these identifications may vary in the richness of their elaboration, they are never absent. A certain sound may be heard simply as "that sound which comes from outdoors late at night." Or it may be heard as "those porcupines chewing on that old tree stump." When an event cannot be thus categorized and identified, we experience terror in the face of the uncanny. And indeed, "the uncanny" is itself a category, even if only a residual one.[44]

Levy adds that the uncanny "is the residual category of things that go bump in the night."

The direction of my argument should be clear by now. In situations of sensory deprivation (considering the term broadly to include solitude, night, dreams, and other states in which people receive reduced sensory input from their environment), people in other cultures interpret extraordinary experience as an appropriate context for a supernatural encounter. The specific

category by which they categorize or label the experience will depend upon the culturally defined image available to them and stored in their memory bank. In at least some cases the experience of a supernatural being in the natural world causes insanity. That is, a creature from another realm is found in the natural world, and the shock of it causes illness of the mind. A plausible explanation for this is that the categorical confusion of realms is so "unthinkable" as to cause the thinking or conscious mind to temporarily "disappear." The object is too powerful for the rational mind to contain. When, however, the supernatural appears to the mind in an altered state of consciousness, one in which the normal categories of thought do not obtain, it not only can be contained but also can be conceptualized as conferring power to the person who encounters it.

The conclusion to which I am led by this line of reasoning is that supernatural encounters can be experientially real in the same way that anything else out there in the world is real. Whether or not an experience is classified as a supernatural encounter, a misperception, or a manifestation of disease depends upon the cultural explanation available for it. In each case, however, it is defined as unnatural or extraordinary, and its manifestation is somehow linked to the condition of mind of the person who is having the experience. It appears to me that the Sasquatch as experienced by members of modern Western society is at least comparable to creatures experienced in other cultures as supernatural. Data to test this hypothesis are not yet available, since Sasquatch investigators have so far concentrated on the object of experience rather than the experiencing subject. Perhaps this book will inspire professional phenomenological investigation of the Sasquatch event.

Far from resolving the issue, however, this hypothetical reconstruction of the experiential context for a Sasquatch sighting merely leads to another level of the problem, one which is even more challenging to our systems of explanation. As documented in Parts I and II of this book, Sasquatch-like creatures have been reported by people living in societies widely separated in time and space. Consider, for example, the following description of the fearsome Witiko (or Windigo), a creature reported by Algonkian Indians in eastern Canada:

> Those who claim to have seen the Wetikoo say that he is a terrible looking creature; his hair is long and matted. Living like a wild beast, ever exposed to the elements, never washing himself, he has a face which brings horror to those who see him. He has the look of ever grinning as his lips are eaten away by himself as far as his teeth can reach. He uses as hair oil the feces of human beings and that partly

> explains the terrible odour which is said to be most noticeable when he is near.[45]

This is remarkably consistent with the Sasquatch descriptions summarized by John Green in his paper. However, the Algonkian cultural explanation for the Witiko is that it was once a normal person who was transformed to this grotesque condition as a result of extreme stress (see Preston's paper).

How do such consistent descriptions of wild or animalized humans occur from culture to culture, regardless of how they are explained, especially if there is no such creature out there in the world? We are forced to assume that the consistency is a product of the mind and that it somehow arises in imagination out of the action of the brain upon the environment. According to the structuralist perspective in anthropology, anomalous creatures (monsters) are created when the mind rearranges elements of normal experience as an intellectual act of understanding the relationship between man and nature. The essays in this book by Ridington, Buckley, Fogelson, Graburn, and myself are essentially structural in logic.

One of the leading architects of structural theory in anthropology is Victor Turner, who has discussed monsters as follows:

> monsters and dragons are compounded from various *discriminata*, each of them originally an element in the common sense construction of social reality. In a sense they have the pedagogical function of stimulating [people's] powers of analysis and revealing to them the building blocks from which their hitherto taken-for-granted world has been constructed. But in another way they reveal the freedom, the indeterminancy underlying all culturally constructed worlds, the free play of mankind's cognitive capacities. Synthesis, as well as analysis, is encouraged by monster construction.[46]

The creation of monsters frees humans from their day-to-day location in the world of common sense. In the act of imaginative recombination of elements of the world, these elements are seen from a new perspective and new qualities of their nature are revealed. Thus a being which is both human and animal stimulates new awareness of the categories out of which it is composed, the human and the animal categories of being.

Even more significant for my argument is that Turner locates this potential for freedom or creativity in what he calls *liminality*, a condition experienced

in ritual contexts. While it is not confined to formal ritual space, liminality is commonly experienced there, especially in traditional societies. Liminality is an elusive concept, one that has not yet been thoroughly explored. Turner calls it the "betwixt and between," referring to its location between ordinary states of being in which humans are confined to or limited by social roles. The "between" is the liminal, outside of normal time and space. It is where masks are worn and the inhabitants of the Goblin Universe appear. It is where the sacred is revealed and its power acquired. It is where the normal rules of thought and life do not obtain and miracles of transformation occur, where the creatures of dream and imagination become real.

The precondition for liminal experience is that a person be removed from his or her normal location in social time, space, and relationship. This can obviously occur in isolation as well as in ritual. Significantly, this posits that the person's anchor in a social context is also his or her anchor in common sense. To say it more boldly, society and common sense are different aspects of the same thing. Thus, Turner argues that liminality is an escape from the constraints of society, including normal or rational categorization of the world:

> But for me the essence of liminality is to be found in its release from normal constraints, making possible the deconstruction of the 'uninteresting' constructions of common sense, the 'meaningfulness of ordinary life' . . . into cultural units which may then be reconstructed in novel ways, some of them bizarre to the point of monstrosity. . . . Liminality is thus the domain of the 'interesting' or of uncommon sense.[47]

The mind freed from social constraints can move into the limitless domain of liminal creativity, from which emerge not only monsters but many of the images we call Art.

My paper on the Tsimshian monkey mask presents evidence of a Sasquatch-like image which is also refracted or dispersed into different human-like qualities perceived in various natural phenomena, such as a bird's cry that sounds like a human baby crying. The common feature of such manifestations is contained in the Tsimshian word *ba'wis* ("monkey," "ape," "Sasquatch"), which is glossed by the linguist John Dunn as meaning "any animal that can imitate human behaviour with great alacrity and deftness."[48] Here I think we can discover the process by which Turner's monsters are created—in the confusion of two of the basic categories according to which the world is ordered, human and animal. Sasquatch is just such an impos-

sible form combining human and animal aspects. It accords comfortably with Turner's thesis in that it is a good liminal image.

But Nelson Graburn's paper in Part II takes us to the even more fundamental process by which forms emerge from the formless. For the Inuit, the Goblin Universe not only contains monsters composed of recombined natural elements, but also it includes beings which have no form at all. Graburn describes certain beings called *turngak* as "the unknown and inexplicable sighting. Strange noises, sights and events are usually described as the work of unnamed spirits which are free-roaming and inhabit everywhere." While they can assume form, appearing as "turngak in the form of ———," they themselves possess no form. In this they contrast with other turngak who do possess stable characteristics and consistent behaviour and locality. The formless turngak seem to exist in a condition of pure indeterminacy or unbounded potentiality. It appears, however, that this potentiality is being lost as the Inuit manifest their turngak in three-dimensional artistic form for sale.

Prior to the late 1950's, the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic did not represent extra-ordinary beings in material form. They were only manifested in the traditional oral form of storytelling. A large proportion of contemporary commercial prints and drawings made since then illustrate spirits or "creations along the same lines as the traditional turngak." The two modes of communication of these forms, storytelling and artistic or tangible representation, differ from each other in important ways that Graburn suggests permit us a glimpse of how the traditional Inuit Goblin Universe is being "reduced to" reality in the process of tangible manifestation. In the change from communication as a social process (storytelling) to individually created permanent forms (art), an "organization of intellectual closure" or "logical totality" has been forced upon the unknowable and inexplicable. As it is manifested in tangible form, the potentiality of the unknowable is reduced. It might be said that the Inuit artist is creating an increasingly determinate reality in order to sell it to us.

Something similar is happening to the dimensions of the Sasquatch in our culture as its image is increasingly appropriated by the mass media. It is significant that Sasquatch lore as it pertains to encounters in nature is singularly free of elaborate symbolic elements, as has been noted by Napier as follows:

> On the face of it, the Bigfoot tales do not qualify for a place in the triumvirate of legend, myth or folktale because they are not really tales at all. There are no complicated constructions or sequences of events in the Bigfoot sagas, there is no social purpose, no fulfilment element, no

> fertility symbolism, no ingenuity or trickery. Bigfoot stories are rather static affairs, in which the narrative style of myth and legend is absent . . . . The poverty of these stories is in striking contrast to the richness of traditional tales from other parts of the world.[49]

A comparable poverty of associated myths is noted by John Colarusso in his paper in this volume. He reports that his informant was offended that the Almasti (the Sasquatch of the Caucasus region of the U.S.S.R.) should be considered a mythological beast; he was proud of his culture's mythology and felt that the Almasti, a mundane animal, had no place in it.

This neglect is changing rapidly in North America, as product and media hucksters discover that the Sasquatch is a highly saleable image. In my office, I have some pastries made in the shape of a human footprint, with toenails of chocolate icing; a large canvas bag in the shape of a tennis shoe with "Bigfoot" written on it; a board game called "Bigfoot," in which a player is out when the foot lands on him; and two novels in which Sasquatch encounters humans in contexts of sex and violence. Sasquatch has been widely featured on television, in the movies, and in advertisements. One of Canada's most celebrated writers, Margaret Atwood, has written a poem about it (see Michael Ames's epilogue). Our preoccupation with the monster is growing. Indeed, in her paper in this volume, Carole Carpenter argues that Sasquatch has become Canada's number one monster.

A pattern is emerging, and this book is just another of its manifestations. We are increasingly communicating to each other with symbols from the Goblin Universe. The media have located an appetite for these symbols and are feeding it. It is their business to discover the hidden symbolic connections in our culture and exploit them commercially.[50] What are we really saying? As an anthropologist, I must assume that we are talking about ourselves and expressing something that we dare not say directly. Something is standing there, waiting to be recognized.

Which brings us to the footprints. No matter where a Sasquatch discussion begins, nor how far it wanders, one must always return to the footprints. Napier discovered this when he reviewed the evidence:

> I am convinced that the Sasquatch exists, but whether it is all that it is cracked up to be is another matter altogether. There must be *something* in northwest America that needs explaining, and that something leaves manlike footprints. The evidence I have adduced in favour of the reality of the Sasquatch is not hard evidence; few physicists, biologists

> or chemists would accept it, but nevertheless it *is* evidence and cannot be ignored.[51]

Notice that Napier does not say what it is that leaves the footprints, but he was unable to deny the evidence that there are footprints.

Our definition of reality as that which is tangibly manifested requires that there be footprints. Otherwise, Sasquatch would not be a problem; it would only be a symbol. It would have disappeared into the mind by now, as have the other inhabitants of the Goblin Universe. In his great novel about human survival, Daniel Defoe announces the presence of the man Friday with footprints on the beach. When he saw them, Robinson Crusoe *knew* that he was not alone. Who can leave a footprint without being there? This concept was recently expressed by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., in his novel, *Breakfast of Champions*, when the science-fiction writer, Kilgore Trout, fantasizes about leaving wet footprints on the carpet of a new Holiday Inn:

> It was Trout's fantasy that somebody would be outraged by the footprints. This would give him the opportunity to reply grandly, "What is it that offends you so? I am simply using man's first printing press. You are reading a bold and universal headline which says, 'I am here, I am here, I am here.' "[52]

More grandly, I have seen it reported that Michelangelo said that man was the footprint of God.

The footprints have already acquired some respectable scientific validation. Grover Krantz has published two analyses based upon the assumption that their anatomical complexity and precision could not be readily faked without expert (that is, scientific) knowledge.[53] Other scientists have, like Napier, found them impossible to deny.

I am struck with the symbolism of it. Our footprints are evidence that we have touched the earth, that we are corporeal and of nature. The foot itself is generally despised, and almost denied altogether in women's high-heeled shoes. If the great Sasquatch foot symbolically contains man's animal mortality, then it is even more imperative to look at it than if it is just another animal. Even if Sasquatch encounters are only perceptual errors by people who are temporarily away from their ordinary minds, we share with these people a common humanity, and it is therefore also our perceptual error, one which repeatedly occurs. In answering the question of whether

killing a Sasquatch would be murder, Grover Krantz wrote: "The crux of this exchange is whether the sasquatch is human in any sense of the word, and the answer is no."[55] I think we should reverse the question. The crux of the matter is whether humans are in any way like the Sasquatch, and the answer is yes.

Sasquatch is a fulsome liminal symbol, containing fundamental paradoxes of being and non-being, mind and matter, life and death. It straddles and incorporates boundaries that we consider absolute, that are fundamentally required by our system of rationality. To the extent that it is as it appears to be—a being of the mind which leaves footprints in the earth—Sasquatch remains absolutely inexplicable, a genuine mystery. And so my suggested reformulation of the Sasquatch encounter as a classic experience of the supernatural fails in the end, since our culture denies that the supernatural can manifest directly in the world, leaving material traces in the ground. Looking at a plaster cast of a Sasquatch footprint, I must confess to total bafflement. There are no further intellectual formulations I can muster to dispel the mystery of this wonderful phenomenon. Nor do the other essays in this book solve the problem—but they do make it all the more compelling.

Notes

1. John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Saanichton, B.C.: Cheam Publishing Ltd. and Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1978), p. 11.
2. Quoted in John Napier, *Bigfoot* (New York: Dutton, 1972), p. 12.
3. Ibid.
4. Guenther Stent, "Prematurity and Uniqueness in Scientific Discovery," *Scientific American* 227 (1972): 84–93; quoted in Kenneth R. Pelletier, *Toward a Science of Consciousness* (New York: Dell, 1978), p. 250.
5. Green, *Apes Among Us*, p. 461.
6. Grover S. Krantz, "Introduction and Commentary," in Roderick Sprague and Grover S. Krantz, eds., *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch* (Moscow: University Press of Idaho, 1977), p. 9.
7. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).
8. Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain* (New York, London, Heidelberg, Berlin: Springer International, 1977).
9. J. J. Gibson, "Perception as a Function of Stimulation," in *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, ed. S. Koch, Vol. 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 457; quoted in Robert B. Macleod and Herbert L. Pick, Jr., eds., *Perception: Essays in Honor of James J. Gibson* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 47.

10. See Julian E. Hochberg, *Perception*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1978), or any modern textbook on perception.
11. V. B. Mountcastle, "The View from Within: Pathways to the Study of Perception," *John Hopkins Medical Journal* 136 (1975); quoted in Popper and Eccles, *Self and Its Brain*, p. 253.
12. Popper, in ibid., p. 92; see also J. Y. Lettvin et al., "What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain," *Proceedings of the Institute of Radio Engineers* 47 (1959).
13. Reproduced from Hochberg, *Perception*, p. 3.
14. David Katz, *Animals and Men* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953); quoted in Popper and Eccles, *Self and Its Brain*, p. 92.
15. Reproduced from Hochberg, *Perception*, p. 85.
16. Eccles, in Popper and Eccles, *Self and Its Brain*, p. 469.
17. Ibid.
18. See Popper and Eccles, *Self and Its Brain*, Chapter E8 (Eccles).
19. Pelletier, *Science of Consciousness*, p. 83; see also N. F. Dixon, *Subliminal Perception* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).
20. Popper, in Popper and Eccles, *Self and Its Brain*, p. 125.
21. Ibid.
22. Emil Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. J. Spaulding and G. Simpson (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951).
23. Ibid., p. 229.
24. Robert Shaw, Michael McIntyre, and William Mace, "The Role of Symmetry in Event Perception," in Macleod and Pick, *Essays in Honor*, p. 280.
25. Pelletier, *Science of Consciousness*, p. 131.
26. Ibid., p. 57.
27. Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser River of B.C.*, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir no. 1 (Victoria: B.C., Provincial Museum, 1952), pp. 97–98.
28. Wayne Suttles, "On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 6, no. 1 (1972): 65–90.
29. Ibid., p. 66.
30. Ibid., pp. 73–79.
31. Duff, *Upper Stalo Indians*, p. 112.
32. Ibid., p. 116.
33. Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir no. 3 (Victoria: B.C. Provincial Museum, 1955), pp. 35–36.
34. Ibid., p. 35.
35. Ibid., p. 37.
36. Ibid.
37. Duff, *Upper Stalo Indians*, p. 99.
38. Ibid., p. 98.
39. Robert I. Levy, *Tahitians: Mind and Experience in the Society Islands* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
40. Ibid., p. 151.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p. 152.
43. Ibid., p. 153.
44. Jerome Bruner, Jacqueline Goodnow, and George Austin, *A Study of Thinking* (New York: John Wiley, 1956), p. 12; quoted in Levy, *Tahitians*, p. 152.
45. Edward Ahenakew, "The We-ti-ko, or He-who-is-alone," manuscript dated April, 1947, quoted in Preston's paper, this volume.
46. Victor Turner, "Process, System, and Symbol: A New Anthropological Synthesis," *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 69.
47. Ibid., p. 68.
48. John Asher Dunn, *A Practical Dictionary of the Coast Tsimshian Language*, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper no. 42 (Ottawa, 1978), entry 141.

49. Napier, *Bigfoot*, p. 207.
50. Marshal Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
51. Napier, *Bigfoot*, p. 207.
52. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Breakfast of Champions* (New York: Dell 1973), pp. 225–26.
53. Grover S. Krantz, "Anatomy of the Sasquatch Foot," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*, 6, no. 1 (1972): 91–104, and "Additional Notes on Sasquatch Foot Anatomy," ibid., 6, no. 2 (1972): 230–41.